

Business confidence picking up

IFC survey finds investment on the rise
The Daily Star, Sunday February 14, 2010

Business confidence and investment have been picking up since October 2009, according to a survey conducted by the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group. "Business confidence improved in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2009 and is expected to sustain in Q1 of 2010. Investment also picked up during the period," it reveals. The report shows that the firms surveyed performed better in Q4'09.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126176>

Two-day BDF meeting concludes

Expectations run high about scaled-up donors' support
The Financial Express, Wednesday February 17, 2010

The government wound up a two-day Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) on February 16 in the capital, expecting its development partners to ramp up aid for sectors as they approved the anti-poverty document. The development partners also gave their seal of approval for a USD 9.5bn investment plan to generate 7000 megawatts of electricity by 2013 and reached an agreement that the bulk of money should come from the government, and the rest from local and foreign private sources and external donors. Held after a gap of almost five years, this year's BDF meeting was considered the most "widely participated" one.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92748

Donors suggest export diversity

The Daily Star, Wednesday February 17, 2010

The development partners of Bangladesh called upon the government to diversify exports and ensure a regular supply of energy and good infrastructure for industries to expedite development. "The dominance of apparels in Bangladesh's export sector makes it vulnerable. Export diversification is needed. And the more labour intensive the new industries are, the better they can address the challenges of employment generation and poverty reduction," said Renata Dessallien, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh, at Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) 2010. Frozen foods, jute, leather and shipbuilding have shown potential, she said, adding that other industries should also expand.

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PM requests donors for quick disbursement of climate funds

Muhith focuses on government's priorities
The Financial Express, Tuesday February 16, 2010

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made an appeal to donors for faster delivery of aid promised in the Copenhagen conference for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Bangladesh needs quick disbursement of funds promised in COP15 in Copenhagen last December, for adaptation and mitigation, particularly for most vulnerable countries (MVCs), least developed countries (LDCs), low-lying coastal and small island countries, she said.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92642

Bangladesh rejects GBP 60mn in climate aid from UK

The Financial Express, Tuesday February 16, 2010

Bangladeshi government is reportedly refusing to accept a GBP 60mn donation from Britain to help it cope with the impact of global warming, because of a dispute over how the money will be provided, reports UNB. Officials in the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) are insisting that the money, part of a pledge to provide developing countries with climate finance, is channeled through the World Bank (WB). Bangladesh has objected to the role of the bank, which it says will attach unfavorable "strings and conditions".

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92647

Import orders up, actual imports fall in January

The Financial Express, Sunday February 14, 2010

The country's overall import orders recorded a rise by over 9.0% in January this year over the previous month of the last calendar year. Opening of fresh letters of credit (LCs) against imports, generally known as import orders, rose to USD 2.166bn in January 2010 from USD1.979bn in December 2009. On the other hand, the settlement of LCs for imports, generally known as actual imports, fell by 12% to USD1.822bn during the period under review compared with the previous month. Bankers said the import orders of essentials may rise in the month of February due to increase in demand for items, particularly fertiliser, edible oil, petroleum products, and food grains in the local market.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92462

Declining investment, imports, exports to slow down growth

Rising inflation poses big challenge
The Financial Express, Friday February 12, 2010

The country's economic growth is expected to slow down to 5.5% this fiscal year, as exports and investment went into the red, imports of industrial machinery and raw materials dipped, and inflation shows signs of upward movement, experts said. Remittances, a flat exchange rate, strong farm output and a robust foreign exchange reserve are some of the areas where the economy has excelled, but the performance was not good enough to boost growth beyond last fiscal year's 5.88%, they added. Former Bangladesh Bank governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said that the manufacturing sector is the main driver of economic growth in Bangladesh, but lack of investment has hit the sector.

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Muhith for great leap in number of VAT payers

Seminar mulls reforms in VAT law
The Financial Express, Friday February 12, 2010

Finance minister AMA Muhith assigned a challenging task to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to increase the number of VAT payers by five times to 3.0 million from the existing 0.65 million in an effort to raise revenue. It is necessary to expand the net of Value Added Tax (VAT) to boost revenue earning from domestic sectors, he said. The challenge of collecting VAT is much bigger than income tax, as the number of registered organisations is still poor, the minister added.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92275

New law to make VAT return submission mandatory

The Financial Express, Thursday February 18, 2010

A new VAT law will enforce submission of VAT return mandatory for all registered businesses eliminating the existing payment system at compressed rates. "A large number of VAT payers enjoy truncated base and tariff value for payment of tax. They are reluctant to submit returns as taxmen already know their business transaction figure with the paid tax," said a senior tax official. A truncated base system fixes certain compressed rates as payable VAT for some categories of businesses while tariff value sets specific amount of VAT for products. Under the new law the government will impose 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) on all services and products abolishing variable rates, he said. A taskforce of NBR has been working on framing the new VAT law.

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Taxmen dismayed as finance ministry backtracks on bonus

The Financial Express, Sunday February 14, 2010

Resentment is brewing among the taxmen after the ministry of finance reneged on its pledge to pay incentives worth BDT 178mn (USD 2.57mn) to thousands of top performing revenue officials. The revenue board had promised to distribute the amount to 9,269 officials including top and field level employees as 'performance bonus' after they almost achieved an ambitious tax target in the difficult 2008-9 fiscal year. The surprise backtracking left the taxmen dismayed and fumed - some of them even made verbal protests to the highest echelon of the board.

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Consumers, local industry groan under continued tariff protection

Government taskforce finds anomalies in tariff structure
The Financial Express, Monday February 15, 2010

Continued protection of the local industry through layers of tariffs and non-tariffs has bred inefficiency and contributed to escalating prices of products manufactured in the country, a taskforce has said. Still, local industry continues to be heavily shielded by a series of tariff protections, forcing consumers to bear the price burden and scuttling attempts to diversify exports beyond garments and textiles. "Prolonged protection breeds inefficiency. Protection is a tax on consumers and a subsidy to the producers," the taskforce said. "The burden therefore lies with the government to balance consumer and producer interests in managing protection policy. Tariff rationalization should be viewed as an essential part of this balancing act," it said. The report has identified that the maximum rate of tariffs remain unchanged to 25% for the past five years. "It is time to lower the top rate and continue to gradually reduce the rate over a pre-announced period of time," it suggested.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92552

Market monitoring amid inflation fear

The Financial Express, Thursday February 11, 2010

The monthly rate of inflation, according to the latest available data, has started rising again, hitting hard low-income groups in both urban and rural areas. The food inflation rate in November in rural area stood at 7.0%. In urban areas, the same rate stood at 7.24% -- the highest in last 14 months. The price situation, going

by the trends in both global markets, is likely to come under further strains in the coming months. The prices of rice have already gone up substantially in last two months, despite full harvest of Aman rice, the second largest cereal product, in the local market. According to reports in the media, food price inflation witnessed a 9.83% increase in urban areas, reflecting a fresh wave of price upswing.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92166

IMF lists rising commodity prices, excess liquidity as risks to economy

Cautions banks against greater involvement in capital market
The Financial Express, Thursday February 18, 2010

Rising commodity prices and surplus liquidity could lead to inflationary pressures and weaker balance of payments in Bangladesh, warns the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Washington-based agency has also warned that remittances, export earnings, commodity prices, and excess liquidity in the banking system could spawn major macroeconomic risks. The global lender criticised the country's supervisory system, saying it falls short of international standards and "significant risks and vulnerabilities still exert pressure on the country's financial sector stability," although some progress was made.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92847

Rice price creeps up

Staple cost increases BDT 5-BDT 11 per kg in seven months
The Daily Star, Monday February 15, 2010

Prices of all types of rice have soared as high as 37.25% since the beginning of the current fiscal year. Retailers and wholesalers continue to blame big millers for hoarding and a reduced supply, while millers put the blame on the high prices of paddy caused by low output in the immediate past Aman harvest. But the agriculture ministry said Aman output hit a record of 13.1mn tonnes in FY2009-10 following a good harvest of Boro the same year. Prices of fine varieties of rice Miniket and Najir Shail increased by 30.64% from July 1 to February 14. Rice varieties with medium quality such as Paizam and Lata were up 37.25%.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126302>

Government's bank borrowing falls

The Daily Star, Friday February 12, 2010

Government borrowing from the banking system went down to a record low in the first seven months of the current fiscal year mainly because of increased foreign assistance and a huge sale of national savings instruments. Foreign aid increased by 446% and the sale of savings instruments by 313% in the first six months of the current fiscal year. According to Bangladesh Bank statistics, the government did not borrow from the banking system during the July-January period, rather it repaid BDT 9,138 crore.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125915>

PM launches agri input cards

The Financial Express, Wednesday February 17, 2010

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina on February 16 urged farmers to make Bangladesh self-sufficient in food as her government launched a new helpline to assist the peasantry in cash and kind.

She gave the call while inaugurating the newly- introduced Agri-input Assistance Card and Cash Assistance programme for the country's farmers at a function at Balikandi in Atpara Upazila. To begin with, the PM distributed cards among 20 farmers. A total of 18.2mn farmers of the country will get the incentives under the recipe.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92751

Export restriction on raw jute goes

The Financial Express, Friday February 12, 2010

The government withdrew the ban on the export of all types of raw jute amid a severe supply shortage of the fibre in the local market. "The government has decided to withdraw the restriction on export of raw jute, which was issued on December 7, 2009," a textile and jute ministry circular said. The government, however, slapped a permanent ban on shipment of BTR (Bangla Tossa Rejection) grades of raw jute except one, for which letter of credit (LC) for export has already been opened this year, it added. The circular said that the export of jute goods will receive more preference than that of raw jute in the future.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92274

Stock Market News

IPO floatation guidelines set to be revised next week

The Financial Express, Saturday, February 20, 2010

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) is set to revise the guidelines that a company would have to follow to offload a minimum of 40% of its paid-up capital through an IPO, it said last November.

According to the revised guidelines, which are likely to be issued early next week, the percentage of IPO of an intending company has been tagged with the amount of paid-up capital under three categories. A company having paid-up capital worth above BDT 1.5bn (USD 21.7mn) has to go for IPO to offload a minimum of 15% of its paid-up capital. However, the value of such a company's IPO has to be minimum BDT 400mn (USD 5.8mn), according to category-one of the revised guidelines. Under the new guidelines for the second category, a company having paid-up capital between BDT 750mn (USD 10.8mn) and BDT 1.5bn (USD 21.7mn) has to go for IPO with the minimum of shares equivalent to 25% of its paid-up capital. The amount of such company for IPO has to be a minimum of BDT 300mn (USD 4.3mn). Under the last category a company having the paid-up capital worth less than BDT 750mn (USD 10.8mn) must raise at least 40% of its paid up capital through IPOs.

Officials in the MoF said they have finalised the revised regulations for IPOs in consultation with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=93027

More textile IPOs in sight

The Daily Star, Tuesday February 23, 2010

The stock market braces for initial public offerings from a number of textile and garment companies, which plan to expand business to have a greater pie of the global apparel market. Envoy Textile, a unit of Envoy Group, is among the companies stepping into the stock market, as the SEC has already given a go-ahead to the company's move to raise capital. Envoy will float IPO of BDT

400mn (USD 5.78mn) on Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges with a face value of BDT 10 next year. The group has already sold a portion of the shares under a private placement.

A unit of Purbani Group, a leading fabric maker, is also in the pipeline to offload shares of approximately BDT 300mn (USD 4.33mn). SQ Celsius, a unit of SQ Group has announced a plan to offload shares to the tune of more than BDT 1500mn (USD 21.64mn) by year-end. On settlement of the pre-IPO or private placement by June, the formal share trade will debut in September.

At present, 26 companies in the textile sector are listed on Dhaka Stock Exchange. Of the total scrips in the sector, some under-perform due to delayed annual general meetings and lapses in awarding dividends to shareholders for years.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=127517>

No loan to buy GP shares anymore

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Grameenphone is no more a marginable security, as its PE (price earnings) ratio crossed 50 points on February 17. Therefore, investors will no longer be allowed to seek credit from brokerage houses and merchant banks to buy GP shares. Investors will have to buy GP shares only with cash in their portfolios.

The 50-point mark is the level set by the stock market regulator below which investors are allowed to seek margin loans. GP's PE ratio reached 53.84 on February 17.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126754>

LankaBangla Securities plans to go public

The Financial Express, Wednesday, February 17, 2010

LankaBangla Securities by the numbers	
LankaBangla Finance owns	99.99 percent
Paid up capital	Tk 50 crore
Shares to be floated (planned)	3 crore
Face value of shares	Tk 10
Stock dividend for 2009	104.25 percent
Number of brokerage branches	7

LankaBangla Securities Ltd, a subsidiary of LankaBangla Finance Ltd, plans to go public using book building method within the next three months. The brokerage firm will float 30 million ordinary shares of BDT 10 (US 14.4 cents) each. The raised fund will be used for business expansion and diversification.

The company may strategically invest in other companies, participate in the bond market, and effectively activate dealership activities. LankaBangla Securities is a 99.99% owned subsidiary of LankaBangla Finance

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126665>

50 MFs await SEC nod to go public

The Financial Express, Saturday February 13, 2010

A total of 50 mutual funds (MFs) with a grand size of BDT 59.35bn (USD 858.9mn) are waiting for the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) nod to go public, SEC officials said. However, the SEC said it would approve the mutual funds, whose prospectuses have already been submitted, one by one. The SEC officials said, among the mutual funds, the highest size is BDT 3.50bn (USD 50.7mn) and the lowest size is BDT 0.5bn (USD 7.24mn). They also said the IPOs of four mutual funds - 3rd NRB first Mutual Fund, Janata Bank First Mutual Fund, IDLC Mutual Fund: Scheme One, and Islamic Finance and Investment Limited Mutual Fund - are likely to get approval soon.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92361

Mutual funds free to fix their record dates

The Financial Express, Wednesday February 10, 2010

The SEC said fund managers will not need permission to fix the record date for offering cash dividend. Earlier, in a verdict the High Court allowed the close-end mutual funds to issue rights or bonus shares without curbing the absolute power of the SEC. Later, the SEC decided not to appeal against the verdict of the High Court and said in a directive that the funds, which launched their operation before the amendment to the Mutual Fund Act 2001 in June 2007, will have to apply to the SEC for the issuance of rights or bonus shares.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92060

DPDC, REB to go public soon

Power Grid co to offer more shares

The Financial Express, Tuesday February 9 2010

The finance minister after an inter-ministerial meeting on January 13 announced that the government would offload the shares of DPDC, PGCB and Rural Power Company. At the meeting, it was decided that DPDC and PGCB would offload 15% more shares on the market by next May. Rural Power Company would offload 49% of its shares by June.

http://thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=91945

'SEC-RJSC merger to ensure coordination in proper monitoring of companies'

The Financial Express, Monday February 08, 2010

The SEC says that a merger between the stock market regulatory body and the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) will help bring coordination in proper monitoring of a huge number of companies, both public and private. At present there are 236 listed companies and around 60,000 private companies.

In an internal evaluation report, the SEC said establishment of a strong bond market and offloading shares of government-owned and multinational companies will help develop the country's stock market. The establishment of a 'Financial Reporting Council' will help bring transparency in the accounting statements of the companies, the SEC reported.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=85553

Banking

Banking overhaul reduces net classified loans

The Daily Star, Tuesday February 23, 2010

Net classified loans in the banking system have come down to 1.7% of total outstanding loans. The latest development brings a sense of security to depositors as banks have been taking responsibility for bad loans for past last few years. On the other hand, the central bank's move to monitor banks under a 'problem bank unit' since the early 1990s contributed to the development.

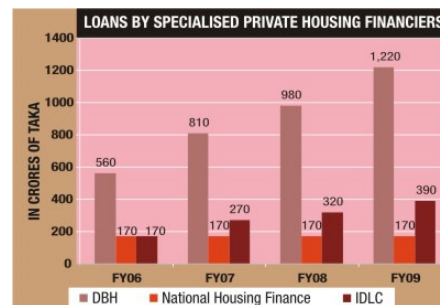
Central bank statistics show total classified loans stood at BDT 420bn (USD 6.06bn) at the end of 2009, of which, gross classified loans were BDT 224.42bn (USD 3.24bn) while banks wrote off more than BDT 200bn (USD 2.89bn). However, net classified loans reached BDT 38.92bn (USD 561.6mn) or 1.72% of total outstanding loans.

Private commercial banks performed well in terms of provisioning bad loans in the last years. However, state banks came forward in provisioning its bad loans, especially after becoming public limited companies in 2007. State banks had been reluctant to manage bad loans, but the trend changed gradually when banks were handed over to private management.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=127518>

Home loans on a roll

The Daily Star, Monday February 22, 2010



Housing finance by specialised private providers has been rising rapidly in the past few years, fuelled by growing demand from the urban middle-class. In the past three years -- from FY2006-07 to FY2008-09 -- average housing loans provided by the private sector rose by nearly 26% a year. The highest growth -- 39% -- occurred in FY2006-07, while the following two years achieved 17.6% and 21% growth respectively, despite the impacts of global recession on real estate.

There are several specialised private housing finance companies offering loans for construction, renovation and the purchase of residential accommodation. Of them, Delta-Brac Housing Finance Corporation (DBH), IDLC Finance, and National Housing Finance and Investments Ltd are the market leaders.

The outstanding loan figure of Delta-Brac Housing Finance stood at BDT 12.2bn (USD 176.2mn) or nearly 70% of the total loans provided by specialised private housing financiers on June 30, 2009. Recently, banks, particularly private banks, have aggressively come up with home loans. These banks are seen as significant competitors to housing financiers. At the end of June 2009, private banks' market share crossed 41%, up from 35% three years ago.

The terms of housing loans are generally between 1 year and 20 years, and the interest rate varies from 14% to 17% a year, differing from organisation to organisation.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=127357>

Rupali Bank board empowered with operational autonomy

The Financial Express, Sunday February 21, 2010

The board of directors of Rupali Bank Ltd has been empowered with the operational autonomy, which has so far been exercised by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), through a resolution taken in its sixth Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held on February 17. The EGM amended a number of clauses of the Memorandum and the Articles of Association of the Rupali Bank Ltd and awarded the board with authority to hire and fire officials and employees at all levels.

The government, which owns a 94.5% stake of the ailing State-owned Commercial Bank (SCB), now wants Rupali to be run by professionals who should get attractive compensation packages and enjoy adequate autonomy. Rupali has long been suffering from lack of policy support from the government, particularly from the MoF, resulting in huge classified loans both in public and private sectors.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=93107

BB mulls easing rules for subordinated debt

The Financial Express, Tuesday February 16, 2010

The central bank is considering relaxing the rating conditions for banks to introduce subordinated term debt to raise capital in line with a Basel II requirement. A bank, which has composite CAMELS rating 2, BB Rating Grade 2 and entity (bank) rating 2, is eligible to issue subordinated debt, according to the criteria. Several applications for issuing the debt are pending with BB, but most do not fulfill the required rating criteria. Several banks including Mercantile, BRAC and state-owned Janata have applied to BB to issue subordinated debt, said officials from the banks and the BB. Prime Bank is the only bank that has issued the debt instrument even though it has been four months since the BB issued the guidelines.

Earlier in October 2009, the BB permitted the banks to raise capital through debt instruments, particularly with subordinated debt, instead of issuing only rights and bonus shares, following demands from the banks.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126542>

Pubali Bank to expand horizon

The Daily Star, Wednesday February 10, 2010

Pubali Bank plans to expand its exchange houses to net more remittance and open offshore banking units and Islamic banking segments for the first time. The bank has also taken a move to automate its 386 branches to render faster services to clients. The bank will also boost its security trading business.

The bank recently received permission from Bangladesh Bank to open two exchange houses -- one in the United Kingdom and the other in Malaysia -- owned fully by the bank. The bank, however, had applied for seven exchange houses in seven countries. The other countries it wished to expand to include Italy, USA, UAE, Spain and Singapore. Pubali expects the central bank nod for the other five exchange houses, its MD said. Currently, the bank is

linked with 60 exchange houses in different countries and has corresponding banking facilities with around 300 banks across the globe to channel remittances from Bangladeshi expatriates. Pubali also subscribes to Western Union, a money transfer service company.

In 2009, the bank channeled BDT 35.25bn (USD 465.03mn) in remittances, a 25% growth from the previous year.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125668>

Food and Agriculture

Coca-Cola scouts for partner to set up plant

The Daily Star, Thursday, February 18, 2010

Soft drinks brand Coca-Cola is looking for a joint venture with the government to set up a manufacturing and bottling plant in Bangladesh. Coca-Cola proposed an investment of around BDT 3.45bn (USD 50mn) to set up the plant. However, the company would not reveal the amount of investment it sought to make in Bangladesh as well as the shareholding it offers to the government. Coca-Cola plans to begin sales and distribution operations in Dhaka and Rajshahi regions in the next six months to recoup its market share, lost to other competitors largely because of the absence of Coca-Cola drinks in these markets since August 2008.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126784>

Telecom & IT

High growth in subscription of BTCL broadband internet

The Daily Star, Friday, February 19, 2010

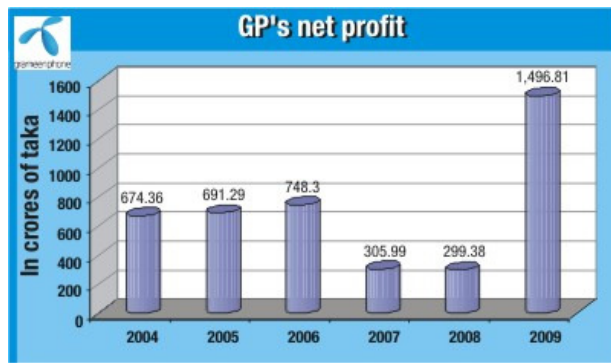
The introduction of new high speed broadband internet packages through Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) by the state-owned Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL) evidenced a 158% rise in subscriptions in December 2009 compared to a month earlier. Such BTCL packages came into effect on December 1 to encourage more customers in its network. According to the official estimate BTCL provided 179 new connections in December, while the figure was 69 in November. In January alone such connections reached 210.

At present, Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna customers have access to the BTCL's full capacity of ADSL connections. Very soon this service will be widened to the Comilla and Rajshahi users. In volume-based category, BTCL introduced BCube supersaver with 128kbps download capacity at BDT 300 (USD 4.35) per month with 2GB free monthly download. Its BCube Premium service with 512kbps download capacity is available at BDT 1200 (USD 17.39) per month with 8GB free download. BCube express with 1028 Kbps download speed is available at BDT 2400 (USD 34.78) with 16 GB free monthly download. For additional download a charge of 10 paisa/MB will be applicable.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126899>

GP rings up hefty profit

The Daily Star, Wednesday, February 10, 2010



Grameenphone (GP) logged over 400% growth in net profit last year according to its first financial disclosure. The leading mobile phone operator said the massive growth was due mainly to the implementation of a cost-cutting strategy and innovative branding for both voice and data services. Unaudited accounts showed the profit after tax reached BDT 14.96bn (USD 216.8mn) in 2009 from BDT 2.99bn (USD 43.3mn) a year ago and thus earnings per share (EPS) increased to BDT 12.08 (US 18 cents) per share at the end of 2009 from BDT 2.46 (US 4 cents) a year ago. Furthermore the unaudited accounts for the fourth quarter showed that GP has made net profit of BDT 8.4bn (USD 121.7mn) with basic EPS of BDT 6.44 (US 9 cents) against BDT 2.6bn (USD 37.7mn) and BDT 2.14 (US 3 cents) for the same period of previous year.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125667>

Tourism

Korean businessmen keen to invest in tourism

The Daily Star, Thursday February 18, 2010

Around 20,000 Korean tourists will now be able to visit Bangladesh every month to enjoy its natural beauty, said J Moon, leader of the visiting Korean tourism entrepreneur delegation in Dhaka. The Korean team leader told Industries Minister Dilip Barua that South Korean entrepreneurs have shown interest in constructing hotels, motels and resorts in Bangladesh for tourists and also in joint ventures.

The Korean team told the minister that the Bangladesh government could extend help in road communication, tourist security and other facilities to ensure quick expansion of tourism industry.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126762>

Tourists to get added pleasure as sea cruise starts at Cox's Bazar

The Daily Star, Sunday February 14, 2010



Keari Cruise and Dine sails through Moheshkhali channel with tourists from Cox's Bazar as the luxury ship started its maiden trip on February 13 morning.

Luxury ship Keari Cruise and Dine started its maiden trip on February 13, offering tourists in Cox's Bazar a unique opportunity to enjoy the picturesque natural beauty of the Bay of Bengal and the beach.

During its daily trip from the jetty, the ship will cross through Moheshkhali and Sonadia channels and sail up to Inani beach in Ukhia upazia. The 35-kilometre trip will take one and a half hours. In another 90 minutes, it will return to Bakkhali River, touching Himchhari, Baro Chhara and Kolatoli. The ship with a 150-seat conference room and arrangement for 310 passengers' travelling will take three two-way trips (morning, noon, afternoon) daily from Bakkhali River to Inani beach and a night trip will be added later.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126226>

Aviation

Biman ticketing goes online by year-end

The Daily Star, Wednesday February 10, 2010

Biman is set to introduce an online reservation and ticketing system to allow travelers to book seats on the internet by year-end. The move is expected to cut dependence on travel agents, as customers will be able to buy tickets online by international credit card. Officials said the introduction of the online ticketing system would also help Biman reduce the costs of using GDS (global distribution system) and commissions for travel agents.

On February 8, 2010, Biman awarded the contract to a Texas-based firm Sabre Airline Solutions, provider of internet booking engine (IBE) to over 50 airlines, to install IBE on the Biman homepage. It will allow the airlines' agents, corporate houses and individual customers to book seats directly. In Bangladesh, two local private carriers -- GMG Airlines and United Airways -- have options for travelers to book seats online. Almost all foreign airlines operating here sell tickets online.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125669>

Minister asks for better services from aviation firms

The Daily Star, Wednesday February 10, 2010

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader said on February 9th that the government would provide all-out support to the aviation companies for operating flights on all the domestic routes within March, which will require reopening the closed airports.

The minister directed the authorities concerned to ensure better air travel and safety in keeping with their flight schedules. After getting the minister's assurance, the air companies agreed to operate flights on all domestic routes within March.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines now operates three domestic routes -- Sylhet, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. Routes linking Rajshahi, Barisal, Syedpur and Iswardi have been closed.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125671>

Direct air connectivity between Dhaka, Chengdu stressed *The Financial Express, Thursday February 11, 2010*

A visiting Chinese business team on February 9th stressed the need for direct air connectivity between Dhaka and Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province of China to further enhance the scope for bilateral trade.

"We both have immense potential in terms of business activities, but we have problems relating to direct air link. This is really obstructing to our potentials," said Huang Xiaoxiang, vice governor of Sichuan Province. Mr Huang Xiaoxiang, the 12-member team leader, also said that they want to enhance their trade with their Bangladesh counterparts in different potential fields.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92126

Dhaka-Delhi, Dhaka-Bangkok **Biman's flights to resume Feb 15, 16** *The Daily Star, Friday February 12, 2010*

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will resume its operations on Dhaka-Bangkok-Dhaka and Dhaka-Delhi-Dhaka routes on February 15 and 16 with the induction of a new generation Boeing 737. Biman's operation on the two routes was suspended in 2009 due to shortage of aircrafts. The flight operation on the Dhaka-Bangkok-Dhaka route will be operated four days a week, and three days a week on the Dhaka-Delhi-Dhaka route.

The Biman authorities have decided to offer a special discount on air fares on these two routes from February 15-March 31 on resuming its operations with the new logo and livery. Details are available from Biman sales counter at Motijheel and also other ticket sales offices as well as local travel agencies.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125992>

Biman dreams big on Colombo, Male routes **Flights to the cities to begin soon** *The Financial Express, Tuesday February 16, 2010*

The state-run Biman will start flight operations with Colombo and Male, targeting Bangladeshi expatriates, outbound passengers from these two countries, and excursion-loving people from home and abroad. Taking advantage of the peace following the anti-LTTE war in Sri Lanka and the economic growth in Maldives, the state-run Biman is looking forward to a future of business profits with strengthened regional connectivity, a Biman official told the FE.

Over a hundred-thousand Bangladeshis live in island-state of Maldives. A great number of Maldives and Sri Lankan nationals also visit and stay in Bangladesh for business, study, tourism or use Zia International Airport as a transit point on their way to the Middle East, Far-East, or further west. Moreover, the current

peace in Sri Lanka has also opened doors to the country for tourists from Bangladesh.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92605

Direct flights between Dhaka, Istanbul later 2010 *The Financial Express, Sunday February 14, 2010*

Turkey plans to start direct flights between Dhaka and Istanbul later in 2010 to boost business between the two countries, a press release said. M Rifat Hisarcikloglu, president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (UCCET), disclosed this in a meeting on February 13 with Industries Minister Dilip Barua in the city. "The direct flight is targeted to increase trade with Bangladesh as there is ample opportunity to invest," M Rifat Hisarcikloglu said.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?page=detail_news&news_id=92408

Energy

Power

Govt signs its first public sector power deals **300MW power by end of 2011** *The Daily Star, Tuesday February 09, 2010*

The Power Development Board (PDB) on February 8th signed contracts with two Chinese companies for two 150MW public sector power projects, both of which will be implemented by the end of 2011. Contracts were signed for Chandpur 150MW gas-fired combined cycle power project with China Chenga Engineering Co (CCEC) and Sylhet 150MW gas-fired simple cycle power project with Shanghai Electric Group.

The Chandpur project will cost a staggering BDT 12.48bn (USD 180.57mn) including BDT 9.02bn (USD 130.54mn) in foreign currency. The Sylhet 150MW simple cycle power project will cost BDT 7.04bn (USD 101.88mn) with the target to commission this plant by September 25, 2011.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125551>

Cabinet body approves 5 peaking power plants *The Financial Express, Thursday February 11, 2010*

The cabinet committee on government purchase approved five furnace oil-run peaking power plants to generate 350MWs of electricity. The committee headed by finance minister AMA Muhith, approved Faridpur 50MW, Dohazari 100MW, Hathazari 100MW, Daudkandi 50MW and Baghabari 50MW power projects. All the approved power plants will be built on a turnkey basis under the public sector.

A consortium of local Energypac Power Generation & Energypac Engineering became the lowest bidder for Faridpur 50MW plant having the contract value of BDT 3.83bn (USD 55.35mn). Chinese Guandong Power Engineering Corporation will build two plants -- Dohazari 100MW and Hathazari 100MW - with a contract value of BDT 9.7bn (USD 140.17mn) and BDT 9.08bn (USD 131.21), respectively.

Fujian Electric Power Engineering and its associates bagged the remaining two power plants - Daudkandi 50MW and Baghabari 50MW. The Daudkandi 50MW plant will be built at a cost of BDT 5.74bn (USD 82.95mn) and the Baghabari 50MW plant at BDT

5.02bn (USD 72.54mn). The bid winners will have to install these plants within 450 days from the effective date of contracts.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92179

Siddhirganj power plant switched on PM says 8 more power plants soon

The Daily Star, Monday February 15, 2010



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offers prayers after inaugurating the 120-MW first unit of the 240-MW Siddhirganj Peaking Power Plant on February 14.

On February 14, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government has taken comprehensive long and short term steps to mitigate the existing power crisis in the country. "The process has been started to set up eight oil-fuelled rental power-generation plants that would produce 530MWs." The PM said this while inaugurating the 120-MW first unit of the 240-MW peaking power plant project at Siddhirganj in Narayanganj.

The government has also taken steps to produce 820-MW electricity with peaking power plants within 2011, and 7,000MW by 2013 through coal-fired units and 2,600MW renewable energy-based powers.

This is the first power plant inaugurated by Hasina after her government assumed office for the second time. The electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh, a newly established state-owned entity, is implementing the project with Asian Development Bank financing of USD 109.86mn (BDT 7.69bn). The total project cost is BDT 11.33bn (USD 163.73mn).

Indian company Bharat Heavy Electric Limited (BHEL) is constructing the power plant as the EPC contractor on a turnkey basis. The Indians completed the installation of the first unit recently while the second unit is also in an advanced stage of completion. This is the second project that the BHEL constructed in Bangladesh. Earlier, it built a 100-MW power plant at Baghabari in Sirajganj, being run by the state-owned Power Development Board for about last one decade.

BHEL provided two units of the plant, each having 126-MW ISO-rated gas turbine and generators along with auxiliaries and gas-booster compressors. Besides this project, BHEL has executed several contracts, including 230 KV Baghabari Substation and extension of the existing 230KV Iswardi Substation.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126315>

Gas

Biogas plant gaining popularity in north

The Daily Star, Sunday February 22, 2010

Biogas plant is gaining popularity among the people of two upazilas in Thakurgaon and Dinajpur districts in producing environmentally friendly fuel for cooking and power generation.

About 213 households have set up biogas plants in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila while 274 in Birganj upazila of Dinajpur district.

The Youth and Sports Ministry is implementing the biogas plant installation scheme in collaboration with a youth development directorate under innovative management of resources for poverty alleviation through comprehensive technology (IMPACT) project.

Only Tk 20,000 is needed to install a biogas plant. The government provides a loan of Tk 15,000 to a person to install a biogas plant. After installing the plant, IMPACT gives Tk 5000 as a subsidy to the beneficiary to inspire others.

Biogas, the most popular technology for generating energy, is a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide produced by feeding cow dung, human waste and water into an airtight underground tank known as 'digester'. Experts said biogas can be used to run an internal combustion engine to produce electricity.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=127412>

No 12 Titas well still unwell

The Daily Star, Sunday February 21, 2010

A well of Titas Gas Field in Brahmanbaria has remained inoperative for over a month, adding to the ongoing gas crisis in the country.

Because well No 12 of Brahmanbaria Titas Gas Field under Bangladesh Gas Field Company Limited (BGFCL) started emitting a huge quantity of water through the gas delivery pipe last month, the BGFCL authorities closed it.

Following the closure of the well with a daily capacity to produce 20 million cubic feet gas, BGFCL authorities took an initiative to increase production in other wells in the field but the process can make up for only half of the amount, BGFCL office sources said.

The situation worsens gas crisis due to shortage of supply to the national grid.

When contacted, BGFCL MD Md Nurul Islam said, "We are going to do the work-over in the well from May. After work-over, the well will regain its full production capacity."

<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=127196>

ADB keen to help build LNG import terminal

The Financial Express, Thursday February 11, 2010

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has shown interest in providing funds to build the country's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal worth over USD 1.0bn (BDT 69.2bn) and assuage the mounting energy crisis, officials said. The Manila-based multilateral donor agency also told Petrobangla to prepare terms of reference (ToR) for the proposed LNG project to approve lending of the fund, the Petrobangla chairman Dr Hossain Monsur said.

The government has already decided to build at least one 3.5mn-tonne capacity LNG import terminal to meet the country's long-term energy needs. It is also working for immediate import of LNG to supply natural gas to the country's gas-hungry industries and power plants in the port city Chittagong via special tankers known as floating, storage, re-gasification units or FSRUs.

The country offered the project along with several large power plant projects before global investment players during the recently-held roadshows in London, New York and Singapore. Some 20 foreign LNG firms took part in the roadshows to provide technical support and supply LNG to Bangladesh, the Petrobangla chairman said.

Several foreign firms including the US's Poten & Partners and Exceleerate Energy will be visiting the country on March to search out an ideal spot to build the LNG terminal.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92101

New Gas Company in Chittagong starts operation *The Financial Express, Thursday February 11, 2010*

Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company (KGDC), a new government enterprise to facilitate gas supply from Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd (BGSL), has started operations. This was able to happen after getting its registration approved from the registrar of joint stock companies (RJSC) after a long struggle with the BGSL. Following the demand of local people, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the concerned authorities to go ahead with KDGC, as the people and industries in the port city consumed over 90 per cent of the total gas supplied by BGSL, sources said.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92108

Gas crisis to be solved by 2012 **Energy roundtable told**

The Daily Star, Wednesday February 10, 2010

The present gas crisis will hopefully come to an end by the end of 2012, as the government has taken multi-dimensional measures to improve the situation, the Petrobangla boss said on February 9th. Hussain Mansur, chairman of the state-owned oil and gas exploration corporation Petrobangla, said as part of the drive for improvement, the government took initiatives to discover new gas fields.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125673>

Steps taken to raise gas output

The Financial Express, Friday February 12, 2010

The government is implementing short and midterm programmes to explore and produce 308mn cubic feet (cft) of gas per day by April 2012, following completion of works on nine development wells, four exploring wells and four wells at different gas fields. "Another long-term programme for exploring and producing 280-million cft gas per day by 2016 through digging nine development wells and exploration wells at Block 7 by Chevron is going on." State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Enamul Haque said this while replying to a question from treasury bench Lawmaker Golan Dastagir Gazi.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92245

Coal

Bangladesh, India to jointly build \$1.7b mega coal-fired power plant

The Financial Express, Sunday February 20, 2010

Bangladesh and India will jointly build a mega coal-fired power plant at an investment of US\$1.7 billion, having the generation capacity for 1320 megawatts (mw) in Khulna near the country's southeastern Mongla seaport.

Bangladesh's state-owned Power Development Board (PDB) signed a joint venture deal with Indian state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Friday night to build the plant to be run by imported coal.

The state-owned power companies of the two neighbouring countries also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance bilateral cooperation in power sector.

"The international tender for setting up the power plant will be floated by July 2010 on completion of the study, with a target to complete the project within 48 months," said the power secretary.

The electricity grid of both these countries will be connected by 2012 next to initiate electricity trade, said the power secretary.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=93028

Clean Energy

PMO goes under solar energy soon

Says PM

The Daily Star, Monday February 15, 2010

Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will soon use a supply of electricity produced from solar energy. On February 14, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina disclosed the switchover to clean, renewable energy while speaking at the inauguration of the 120-MW first unit of 240-megawatt Siddhirganj Peaking Power Plant, at a time when the country has been passing through a nagging power crisis.

Hasina urged all industrialists to use such electricity from alternative sources for their offices. "Obviously, you will use electricity that comes from plants for your industrial units, but please use electricity that comes from solar panel for your official purposes," she said. She said her government has taken initiatives to install solar panels at schools, colleges, mosques, madrasas and other educational institutions.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126398>

Infrastructure

Second Padma bridge at Paturia gets nod

The Daily Star, Monday February 19, 2010

The government is going to construct a second bridge over the Padma River in Paturia at an estimated cost of Tk 13,121 crore or \$1.9 billion with private initiative and without foreign assistance.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs at a meeting approved in principle the proposal made by the communications ministry for constructing the bridge.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith chaired the meeting held at the Cabinet Division yesterday.

The communications ministry is going to float tender on March 4 for construction of the elevated expressway, the finance minister said.

Muhith added the second Padma bridge would not be a multi-purpose one.

The communications ministry yesterday sought approval from the Committee to start tender process for appointment of investors to construct the bridge on Build-Own-Transfer (BOT) or public-private partnership (PPP) basis.

Dhaka Elevated Expressway

The cabinet committee also approved a proposal of the communications ministry to appoint a consultant for the Dhaka Elevated Expressway without tender.

The ministry made the proposal to award the consultancy work to the consultant of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge -- Maunsell-AECOM -- at a cost of Tk 3.1 crore.

Muhith said the proposal was made to award the consultancy for the Dhaka Elevated Expressway to the same consultant to save time. He said the consultant could start the work in next 10 days.

He added it is expected that the work may be completed within three months. It would take at least six months to appoint consultant only if a fresh tender would have to be floated, he said.

As per the plan of the communications ministry, the four-lane Dhaka Elevated Expressway (Gazipur-Narayanganj) would be 32.1 kilometres in length and will cost Tk 8,617 crore or \$1.24 billion.

Joydevpur-Mymensingh Expressway

The cabinet committee also gave its nod to the proposal of constructing Joydevpur-Mymensingh Expressway with government financing of approximately Tk 800 crore.

Earlier, the government decided to construct the expressway on a PPP basis. But the communications ministry put up a proposal to the committee to implement the project with public financing, as PPP initiative would have taken much more time.

Muhith said the condition of Joydevpur-Mymensingh road is in very bad shape. So, quick implementation of the expressway has become urgent.

Three elevated level-crossings get ministry nod

The Financial Express, Thursday February 18, 2010

The Ministry of Communications in a recent meeting with stakeholders agreed in principle to construct three elevated level-crossings for motor vehicles in the capital. Representatives from Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB), Roads and Highways Division (RHD), Bangladesh Army, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkhya (Rajuk) and the Planning Commission attended the meeting, which was chaired by Communications Minister Abul Hossain.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92816

Massive plan on roads, bridges unveiled in JS Eight projects to expand road network; 4-lane Dhaka-Ctg highway; Dhaka bypass reconstruction

The Daily Star, Thursday February 18, 2010

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in parliament on February 17 rolled out her government's massive plans for construction of bridges, roads and railway lines to have an effective and sustainable

communication network. She said the government has approved a 20-year Road Master Plan and taken steps to attract investment in this sector. Preparation for formulation of a coordinated transport policy is at the final stage, she said.

Hasina, also the leader of the House, said the government has taken a project involving BDT 23.83bn (USD 344.36mn) to upgrade Dhaka-Chittagong highway to four lanes. A work order has already been awarded to construct 192.3 kilometre roads for BDT 16.55bn (USD 239.16mn) under the project. The premier said initiatives are underway to find investors for construction of the second Dhaka-Chittagong four-lane highway under BOOT/BOT/PPP considering growing number of commercial and passenger transport.

"The communications ministry had also taken initiatives to upgrade national highways to four lanes under BOT/BOOT/PPP," she added. The prime minister said the government has taken eight projects involving BDT 22.29bn (USD 322.11mn) to expand road links across the country under the Roads and Highways department. Reconstruction of 48-km Dhaka bypass for BDT 520mn (USD 7.5mn) is underway to ease traffic congestion in the capital. It will be opened to commuters soon, Hasina said.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126810>

WB VP confirms USD 1.2bn (BDT 83.4bn) support for Padma bridge

The Financial Express, Tuesday February 16, 2010

Ms. Isabel M. Guerrero, World Bank (WB) Vice President for the South Asia Region has confirmed the Bank's intention to provide exceptional support of USD 1.2bn (BDT 83.4bn) or more to close the financing gap for the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project. Ms. Guerrero, who came to Dhaka to attend the ongoing Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF), conveyed the intention when she met with the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 14, said a WB press release.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92646

Japan offers soft loan for 4 development projects

The Daily Star, Monday February 15, 2010

Japan has proposed a loan of BDT 2,997 crore for four development projects in Bangladesh including two power sector projects at lowest interest rate.

Charge d'Affaires of Japan in Bangladesh Harumitsu Hida made the proposal on February 14 at a meeting with Finance Minister AMA Muhith at his office in Economic Relations Division in the capital. After the meeting, the finance minister told journalists that the agreement for the loan would be signed in the next three months. The four projects would contribute to poverty alleviation in the country, he added.

Of the amount, BDT 702.80 crore has been proposed for Chittagong City Outer Ring Road Project, BDT 170.60 crore for Bheramara Combined Cycle Power Development Project, BDT 1023.10 crore for Rural Electrification Upgradation Project and BDT 1100.80 crore for South Western Bangladesh Rural Development Project.

A press release of Japan embassy in Dhaka said, the conditions of the loan are the most generous. The interest rate is 0.01 percent per annum and the repayment period is 40 years with 10 years grace period.

The new loan package reflects Japan's strong intention to support development, further prosperity and poverty reduction in Bangladesh, the release added.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126329>

Dhaka seeks help for rail, river projects PM meets Turkish president

The Daily Star, Sunday February 14, 2010

Turkey will provide support for power generation, transport, information and communication technology, road infrastructure and other development sectors of Bangladesh. The assurance came when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on visiting Turkish President Abdullah Gul at his hotel suite here on February 13.

Terming Turkey as a development partner of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina called for Turkish investment, especially in railway and waterway sectors of Bangladesh on a large scale, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told journalists.

The Turkish president and the Bangladesh Premier also discussed the much-expected Padma Bridge and modernisation of Chittagong and Mongla sea ports. Saying that her government has a plan to build a deep sea port in Chittagong, the prime minister observed that by using the sea port, neighbouring countries including India, Nepal and Bhutan will be highly benefited.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126185>

Govt to implement Eastern Bypass Road project: PM

The Financial Express, Thursday February 11, 2010

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the House on February 10 that the government has a plan to implement 'The Dhaka Coordinated Flood Control-cum-Eastern Bypass Road Multipurpose Project,' which was suspended in 2003. "The project, which was taken by the previous Awami League government, will be implemented with coordination of Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB), the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), Dhaka WASA, Dhaka City Corporation, Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakhha, Local Government Engineering Department, the Department of Forest and the Department of Environment," she said while replying to a written question raised by ruling party lawmaker AKM Rahamatullah.

The Leader of the House also said that the WDB was working as the lead agency for implementation of the project. "The RHD has already made the 17- km cross-dam from Tongi to Shah Ali Mazar pucca, which remains now suitable for traffic movement," she said. The Prime Minister also said that there was a plan to execute the project in near future according to the Preliminary Development Project Proforma Proposal.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92170

Shipbuilding & Port

Environment ministry favours polluters

The Daily Star, Monday February 20, 2010

The environment and forest ministry has requested the commerce ministry to relax its rules to allow ship breakers to import toxic ships without submission of pre-cleaning certificates from exporters.

The import of such ships will pose risks of health hazards for ship-

breaking workers and widespread environmental pollution in the country's coastal belt.

In a letter to the commerce ministry on Wednesday, the environment and forest ministry said government officials would examine the ships and issue cleaning certificates.

"We have sent the letter to the commerce ministry. But we shall not let any ship pollute the environment. Our officials will examine the ships and only those without toxic substances will be allowed to enter the country's maritime territory," said Environment and Forest Secretary Dr Mihir Kanti Majumder.

He said the ministry is preparing a code of conduct on ship breaking in line with the High Court order and directives from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=127111>

Local-made ship to prevent oil spillage in sea

The Daily Star, Thursday February 11, 2010



The newly-constructed oil-spill cleaner Bay Cleaner-2 to be handed over to Chittagong Port Authority on February 11.

The Chittagong Port Authority on February 11 receives an oily waste collection vessel from Western Marine Shipyard Ltd to prevent spillage of wasted oil into the sea from ships, tankers and other vessels. Commissioned as Bay Cleaner-2, the vessel is first of its kind in the country and will significantly enhance CPA's capacity in safeguarding marine environment as required by the International Maritime Organization under Surface Ocean Lower Atmosphere Study and Marine Pollution, sources said.

At a press conference, Western marine officials said the CPA signed contract with the Lamor Corporation AB of Finland, one of the manufacturers of spill response systems and products, for building the oily waste reception vessel. The Lamor later teamed up with Western Marine to build the vessel at the latter's shipyard. Western Marine Chairman Saiful Islam said the vessel, with a dimension of 25m length, 6.80m width and 4.10m depth, would have a capacity of storing 150cbm oily wastes, 30cbm fresh water, 40cbm fuel oil and 3cbm lube oil.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125810>

Export income through Mongla Port surges

The Daily Star, Sunday February 14, 2010

Export income through Mongla Port has witnessed an upward trend since December 2009, overcoming the downtrend prevailing at the beginning of the current fiscal year. According to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) sources, shrimps worth about USD 11.6mn (BDT 802.72mn) and euro 38,110 were exported to 14 GSP certified countries in December last. In November, frozen shrimps worth over BDT 1.22bn (USD 17.63mn) and white fish

worth BDT 3.57mn (USD 51,589) were exported from 33 fish processing units of Khulna.

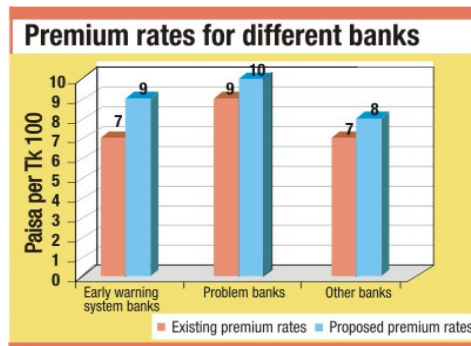
Jute and jute goods worth about BDT 78.80mn (USD 1.14mn) were exported through Mongla Port to India, Pakistan, China during the July- December period last year, the EPB sources added. Other goods such as earthen tiles, handicrafts, betel nuts, plastic goods, brass scraps, and ceramic tiles were also exported through Mongla Port and a substantial amount of foreign currency was earned.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92414

Insurance

Deposit insurance premium to rise

The Daily Star, Sunday February 21, 2010



Bangladesh Bank (BB) will raise the premium for deposit insurance and the coverage to minimise any risk connected to the loss of depositors' funds with a scheduled bank. The banks that are now under an early warning system will have to pay such premium at 9 paisa per BDT 100 (USD 1.45) deposited, which was earlier 7 paisa, according to the new decision. The amount payable as a premium for the problem banks will be 10 paisa instead of 9 paisa and 8 paisa for other banks, which was previously 7 paisa.

The amount of deposit insurance coverage will be raised to BDT 0.2mn (USD 2884.8) from BDT 0.1mn (USD 1442) against each depositor as per BB's plan. To do so, the central bank plans to amend the Deposit Insurance Act 2000, a law that enables it to run such insurance.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=127223>

Thrust on health and agro insurance

The Financial Express, Friday February 12, 2010

Health care insurance and agriculture insurance will get proper attention after the establishment of an Insurance Regulatory Authority. "Once introduced, the health and agro insurance will boost the total insurance market generating a substantial amount of premium extending insurance coverage for the benefit of the poor people," A K M Rafiqul Islam, chairman, Bangladesh Insurance Association (BIA) said at a seminar on Health Care Management and Health Insurance held recently at the BIA Conference Hall in the city.

J.B. Boda Reinsurance Broker India and Paramount Health Group India in cooperation with BIA arranged the seminar. Around 40 officials from life and non-life insurance companies attended the seminar.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92218

Pharmaceuticals

Square tops list of 10, Incepta second

The Financial Express, Monday, February 15, 2010



Square Pharmaceuticals has retained the top position with its local sales figure reaching BDT 10.70bn (USD 155.07mn) in 2009 in the country's BDT 55bn pharmaceutical market followed by Incepta Pharma. The market share of Square Pharmaceuticals was 19.48% in 2009. Sales of Incepta Pharma stood at BDT 4.5bn (USD 65.2mn) in 2009 and it grabbed a market share of 8.24% during the period. Meanwhile Beximco Pharmaceuticals has grown by 27.15% in 2009 taking a market share of 7.72%. Its total sales were BDT 4.2bn (USD 60.87mn) in 2009. Acme Laboratories took the fourth position in ranking figuring sales of BDT 2.64bn (USD 38.26mn) in 2009. Opsonin Pharma Ltd ranked the fifth by local sales worth BDT 2.61bn (USD 37.83mn) in 2009 and its market share of 4.76%. Opsonin's growth during the period was 29.34%. Eskayef, Reneta, ACI, Aristopharma and Drug International took the latter positions.

However the growth and sales of multinational pharmaceutical companies remained steady during 2009. Sanofi-Aventis (market share 2.97%) ranked the top among the multinational pharmaceutical companies followed by GlaxoSmithKline (2.24%). Sandoz (1.65%) took the third position. The market size of Bangladesh, with nearly 250 pharmaceutical companies, has grown by 16.83% in 2009 to BDT 54.93bn (USD 796.09mn) coming above the same period in 2008.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92556

Local telemedicine firm plans to reach out to South Asian workers

The Daily Star, Monday, February 15, 2010

Key facts



- **Name: Telemedicine Reference Centre**
- **Established: in 1999**
- **The company to provide services to five million South Asian workers in the Middle East and Malaysia**
- **Signed deals with around 25 Gulf and Malaysian companies**

A Bangladeshi telemedicine company is set to provide healthcare services for more than five million South Asian workers in the Middle East and Malaysia in a couple of months. Telemedicine Reference Centre Ltd (TRCL) has already signed agreements with around 25 Gulf and Malaysian companies that recruit workers from South Asia. Under the project they will start providing medical call-centre services to two million Bangladeshi, 1.5mn Indian and 2mn Nepalese and Pakistani workers. TRCL has also signed deals with seven mobile phone companies in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar and Kuwait. All the workers under the 25 recruiting companies will be registered with TRCL to get the services free of cost. They will call a particular number and get advice in their own language.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=126304>

Manpower

Hasina urges Kuwait to hire more Bangladeshis

The Daily Star, Wednesday February 10, 2010



Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, labour and expatriate welfare and overseas employment minister, signs a deal on economic and technology cooperation with his Kuwaiti counterpart in Kuwait City on February 8th. Sheikh Hasina, prime minister, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, prime minister of Kuwait, were also present.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 8th said there are many unexplored areas of cooperation between Bangladesh and Kuwait

despite the closeness of these two brotherly nations. Hasina said Bangladesh has, for some time, been participating with manpower in Kuwait's dynamic transformation. Around 250,000 Bangladeshis are involved in Kuwait's economic activities.

She requested the Kuwaiti Prime Minister to intervene to lift the stay imposed in October 2006 on recruitment, thus allowing Bangladeshi workers to serve in Kuwait's development efforts. The prime minister said at present, Bangladesh is in an excellent position to offer services of doctors, engineers, business professionals, nurses and semi-skilled and skilled workers.

Technical personnel with experience are also available in construction, civil aviation, power, water, petrochemical and gas, health and hospitality sectors.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125674>

Textiles

Japan now 'lucrative destination' for Bangladesh garments

The Financial Express, Monday, February 15, 2010

Japan proves to be a lucrative destination for Bangladesh's garments as apparel exports to the Asian giant saw an extraordinary 148.0% growth in the first half of the current fiscal year compared to the same period a year ago. Bangladesh exported ready-made garments (RMG) worth BDT 2.35bn (USD 34.04mn) during the July-December period of 2009-10 compared to BDT 1.34bn (USD 19.42mn) of 2008-09. The country earned BDT 5.13bn (USD 74.38mn) in FY2008-2009 and BDT 1.93bn (USD 28.04mn) in FY2007-08 from RMG export, according to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data. Knitwear accounted for USD 28.09mn during the same period, taking a 371% increase from the previous year. The country made shipments of home textile worth BDT 77.63mn (USD 1.13mn) during the July-December of the current fiscal year.

Japan has reduced its dependence on imports from China, which gave a boost to RMG exports out of Bangladesh further increasing their sourcing from Bangladesh. Bangladesh's garment shipments to Japan started to swell in the middle of last year after the Japanese retail giant Uniqlo opened a sourcing office in Dhaka, prompting many other Japanese retailers to set their sights on Bangladesh. Uniqlo, one of the largest retail chains in Japan, started investing in Bangladesh, to purchase garment items with a plan to invest BDT 4.83bn (USD 70mn) initially. Japanese importers procured BDT 1828.5bn (USD 26.5bn) worth of apparels and accessories from overseas sources with China having the lion's share of more than 80% of shipments. Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar and India are the next significant sources for Japanese apparel importers, but the growth of apparel imports from Bangladesh has been stunning.

http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=92507

Footwear makers up for expansion

The Daily Star, Sunday, February 21, 2010



Top local footwear makers and exporters are set to increase their production capacity to utilize the growing international demand for low-cost Bangladeshi shoes. Meanwhile, footwear export recorded around 30% growth in the July-December period of the current fiscal year compared to the same period last year, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data shows. The sector earned BDT 6.8bn (USD 98.74mn) in exports during the period. Top manufacturers, including Apex-Adelchi Footwear Ltd, Jennys, Landmark, Leatherex, Bay Footwear and Picard Bangladesh, are increasing their production capacity by opening new factories and importing sophisticated machinery and latest technology. The continuous growth in footwear export is the main reason local companies expand, and the enhanced capacity will help the exports increase by more than 40% from 2011.

At present the local companies make leather footwear of around BDT 17bn (USD 246.38mn) a year, of which 45% products are meant for shipment. The country exports around 6mn pairs of leather footwear a year with Apex-Adelchi being the largest exporter.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=127222>